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## FACULTY RESEARCH NOTE

### Lydia Bernstein

Professor Lydia Bernstein of the Department of Foreign Languages is somewhat of a rarity on the Bridgewater State College campus. She is a medievalist, and a scholar of 16th and 17th century Spanish literature. Often called the Golden Age of Spain, this Renaissance/Baroque period gave birth to such classic works of literature as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Professor Bernstein's initial literary interest during this Golden Age was in the study of Francisco de Aldana, a Renaissance poet whose humanism reflects an ultimately repressed tendency of early Spanish culture and whose poems are often viewed as controversial.

Professor Bernstein's interest in Francisco de Aldana began at the University of Texas, where she received her Ph.d. Since being awarded the Ph.d Professor Bernstein has published two journal articles and written two book chapters which analyze various poetic and philosophical tendencies in Aldana's poetry. She is currently commencing work on a book which will address the themes of irony and poetic persona in Aldana's poetry. She has also recently submitted for review by a journal an article on the 17th Century female Spanish poet Maria de Zayas.

Doing research on a poet of the 16th century is often a difficult task. Professor Bernstein must not only be knowledgeable of the language patterns of the times, but also do some scholarly detective work to validate whether the poetry is indeed that of the poet or whether a literary colleague or family member has played a role in the text that reaches the 20th Century. This is a time consuming process requiring an understanding of textual idiosyncracies of 16th century Spanish literature and a working familiarity with the life and times of poets like Aldana.

Much of Professor Bernstein's work on Aldana requires a professional relationship with the University of Texas library, which has the best Spanish language holdings in the



United States. After acquiring the texts of Aldana's works Professor Bernstein must begin making a 400 year old poem come alive again. Despite the difficulty in working with such early works of literature, it is obvious that Professor Bernstein loves her work and values the poetry of a bygone era.

Professor Bernstein has built on her interest in the origins of Spanish literature by branching out into a new area of research. She is currently examining Sephardic literature, the Jewish works of prose and poetry of medieval Spain. This research project is sure to further test the skill and patience of Professor Bernstein since it will require that she examine not only Hispano-Judaic works, but the impact of Muslim and Christian culture on the Sephardic literature. Professor Bernstein must be familiar with Hebrew and Arabic in order to complete this project and be confident in her assessment of the connections among the three literary traditions. The complexities of the research are obvious, but Professor Bernstein is determined to engage in her literary detective work. She hopes to travel within the near future to Spain to follow the trail of both Golden Age and medieval Sephardic literature in libraries, monasteries and universities.

If this were not enough of a challenge, Professor Bernstein is also working on a book of her own poetry. Already a third completed, the book is a personal reflection on Professor Bernstein's experiences and her life searches. The book is a departure from her life as a medievalist/ Golden Age scholar, but a further example of her commitment to poetry and language.

Professor Bernstein fits this extensive research agenda into the normal teaching load at Bridgewater. Her classroom instruction includes Spanish language courses, conversational Spanish and literature courses, such as the advanced course on *Don Quixote* that she will teach during spring semester. Medievalist, Golden Age textual scholar, poet and teacher, Professor Bernstein is another example of the commitment to blend research and teaching at Bridgewater.